1517

Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

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"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."

JOHN HAY.

On Picket Duty.

A fortnight must elapse before the results of the competitive bidding for the files of Liberty can be announced, as five bidders, one of whom lives in San Francisco, are tied for third choice and must bid again.

Comrade Swartz is wrong in saying that the ten per cent. tax is the only governmental impediment to the organization of mutual banks. In many States — more than three-fourths of them, I believe — there are laws on the statute-books making it a criminal offence to issue or pass as currency any notes not authorized as such by the government.

The "American Architect," one of the blindest of the organs of tyranny, and the propounder of the suggestion that any one who might *request* another to stop work should be killed, now writes in a strain of slavishness that would be astonishing, were it not so well known that the slave and tyrant are one: "If we were in the habit of making suggestions as to what our superiors should do, we should say that the Legislatures of the various States, etc., etc." Has it come to this, that the citizens of a government "of the people, for the people, and by the people" should openly bow the knee and acknowledge their "servants" as "superiors"? Citizens of Boston too, born within sight of the Cradle of Liberty, and not of the unlettered sort.

During the interval between the suspension of Liberty in Boston and its revival in New York there occurred an incident in a New York court which it is not yet too late to notice in these columns. Henry George was doing jury "duty" at the time in the capacity of foreman. In one of the cases on trial the judge ordered a verdict against one of the parties. When the clerk went through the farcical formality of asking the jury if this was their verdict, Mr. George promptly answered "No." "Yes, it is," said the judge. Mr. George reiterated that it was not. Thereupon the judge directed the clerk to record as the verdict of the jury the verdict that he, the judge, had ordered. And, if my memory serves me right, the judge then dismissed Mr. George for the remainder of the term. The rebellion of jurymen against the high-handed usurpations of judges is as rare as righteous, as unusual as useful. Others should follow Mr. George's example. This was the bravest thing that I ever knew him to do, and I confess to some surprise. It is insufficient atonement for the murderous and traitorous sins for which Mr. George must answer before any decent man can afford to take his blood-stained hand; but even the devil must have his due.

I fully share Miriam Daniell's enthusiasm for enthusiasm, to which she gives poetical expression in another column. Indeed, this may be gathered from my recent defence of passion against Mr. Pentecost. But there remains another word to be said, which plain prose best befits. Through much suffering the world has slowly learned that there is no dependence to be placed on mere enthusiasm or even on enthusiasm dominant. The enthusiast is the most dangerous of men if he has no brains, or if, having brains, he neglects them or subjects them or obscures them. The most horrible acts of tyranny that stain the world's history were the work of such enthusiasts. They have always been much more ready than philosophers, not only to "state that this is wrong or right," but to enforce their views of wrong or right upon the rest of the world. Without enthusiasm, to be sure, the world would be in a bad way; but fortunately there is no lack of it and therefore no especial need to sing its praises. If singing could shape and guide it, the effort would be well worth a song or two. The safest, most reliable, best enthusiasm is that which is seldom seen because it seldom comes to the surface; that which has lost its froth and foam and bubble (and mayhap, alas! its sparkle also) and settled down into quiet, patient, steadfast, unshakeable determination. It is because of my faith in this enthusiasm and my distrust of any other that, while responding to the poet's words with an "Amen!" and a "Bravo!" I at the same time whisper in her ear that "hell is paved with good intentions" and "still waters run deep." As another poet, my old friend Morse, himself a rare example of enthusiasm of the higher type, has well said:

'Tis not for lack of goodness, man,
The flames of hell are lit;
Hear a whole world's experience
Proclaim 'tis lack of wit.

Blind Leaders of the Blind.

[Hugo Bilgram in the Twentieth Century.]

Now, to demonstrate their [the Homestead workmen's] responsibility for the present social condition and consequent inequitable distribution of wealth between capital and labor, I wish you would send some one there to teach those men that the unjust power of capital is due to the same condition that produces the interest-bearing power of money; that by this power the wealthy obtain an income not due to their labor but wrung from the earnings of others; that by the removal of legal obstructions to the freedom of exchange this power of money can be destroyed, and that thereafter free competition alone will determine the equitable share each producer should get. If you will do so, you will find that these very workmen will think of the few hundred dollars they have invested, and will suspect your representative to be in league with the hated capitalists, trying to deprive them even of those few dollars a year obtained from the investment of their savings, and he will be the first to feel the sting of their vengeance. What can you do with such unreasoning, unreasonable men!

If the O'Donnells and McLuckies should succeed and become the leaders of our social order, do you really believe that their rule would be an improvement upon the present order, however unsatisfactory this order may be! I have every reason to think that it would soon be found to be so unbearable that the reaction that must follow would inevitably delay the solution of the social problem.

What Do They Fear?

They will not listen, dear, what do they fear,
That they shut fast their senses lest they hear?
They will not reason with us, nor will show
A better way in which our feet could go.

They will not talk with us; are they afraid
That we might smash the idols they have made?
Have they worn fetters now so many years
That Liberty to them means pain and fears?

They will not have the Light, for they have been
So long in twilight that the Sun, when seen,
Locks black and blinds them more than that faint gloom
In which they move about their prison room.

Miriam Daniell.

The Poor Man's Look.

[Translated from the French by Benj. R. Tucker.]

The beggar with a bandit's head
Looked straight at me and nothing said.

No meek appeal for pity's sake,
But brusque outthrust of hand to take.

No muttered word of thanks gave he
As he received my charity.

But in his wolfish eyes of gray
I saw the words they had to say.

They said: "Think you, for your two sous,
That I will stoop to kiss your shoes?"

They said: "In truth, your charity
To you is given, not to me."

They said: "The coin you have thrown
At me contents yourself alone."

They said: "For giving of your pelf
'Tis you who ought to thank yourself."

They said: "Two sous for graybeard's food!
And one is proud of being good!"

They said: "To you 'tis such a feast
To make your fellow-man a beast!"

They said: "Were I to spit in spite
On your two sous, 'twould serve you right."

They said: "So be it! I receive
The gift, but will no pardon give."

Without a word, with eyes alone,
Thus spoke to me the silent one.

And I in turn then nothing said
To the beggar with a bandit's head,

But dropped more sous into his hand.
And quickly fled the way I'd planned, —

Fled haunted by suspicion strong
That, after all, he was not wrong.

Jean Richepin.

Liberty.

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NEW YORK, N. Y., AUGUST 20, 1892.

"In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel." — PROUDHON.

☞ The appearance in the editorial column of articles over other signatures than the editor's initial indicates that the editor approves their central purpose and general tenor, though he does not hold himself responsible for every phrase or word. But the appearance in other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other writers by no means indicates that he disapproves them in any respect, such disposition of them being governed largely by motives of convenience.

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Is Free Banking Proximate?

It will doubtless be conceded by all reformers — except, of course, the revolutionists — that reform and progress must come and do come step by step; in other words, that, contrary to the belief of the aforesaid revolutionists, all advancement, to be of a stable and beneficial character, must be brought about gradually. Hence Anarchists are interested in what is the first step, or, rather, the next step; and it is maintained by them that it is freedom in banking, which is, essentially, freedom of the citizen to issue or choose his own circulating medium. That this step is advocated by Anarchists as the next one is, however, not only because it is the one that theoretically should be taken, but also because it is the one that promises to be the most easily and speedily taken.

It is, therefore, with pleasure and gratification that I note the tendency of the times in this direction. And, while the first movement toward this end need not be made by the politicians, it is noteworthy that circumstances are forcing them to take up this issue. In the session of Congress just ended, Representative Harter of Ohio introduced a bill repealing the prohibitory tax of ten per cent. on the issue of St[illegible] bank notes. However, this gentleman was but anticipating the expiration of the national banking system, which will ensue upon the maturity of the last government bonds, and he doubtless had no thought of the fact that he was proposing the removal of the only governmental impediment to the organization of mutual banks. I do not give him credit for being so well-informed on progressive topics as to dream of the possibility of an issue of currency differing materially from the State bank money of several decades since.

This legal restriction on the issue of money by private banks can easily be declared unconstitutional, if the lawyer-politicians make any effort in that direction; and, as most of the people who have the business experience requisite for the organization and successful maintenance of a mutual bank are persons who are to a more or less extent constitution-worshippers, it will probably be necessary, before the experiment of a mutual bank can be made, to wait until that paternal polypus called the United States government graciously condescends to permit the people to conduct the exchange of their commodities in their own way.

But, if the attitude of prominent newspapers and financiers who have influence in shaping legislation may be taken as a criterion, the day of the removal of the ten per cent. tax is not far distant. The Pittsburgh "Post" has been discussing this subject of late, and, though somewhat non-committal in its attitude, it tacitly endorses the proposition of Congressman Harter; but it does not seem to realize that there are other and far better bases for the issue of currency than State, municipal, and railroad bonds. The "Post," as a truly conservative journal, does not attempt to advance any idea of its own or even one evolved by rational and logical deduction from the principle of State rights or local autonomy. It would be heresy for the editor of the "Post" to think for himself; he can only rehash that to which some prominent politician has given utterance.

But in the "Forum" for August Mr. David M. Stone, the well-known editor of the New York "Journal of Commerce," a newspaper high in authority in orthodox financial matters, discusses the "Repeal of the State Bank Tax" in a manner indicative of at least a little more scientific study of the banking problem and of a more thorough knowledge of finance in general than is shown by the editor of the Pittsburgh "Post." In regard to the basis of an issue of bank notes, the volume of which will "adjust itself to the demands of trade," he has this to say:

> Nothing ever served the purpose so well as a bank note put out on the credit of a well-established institution in exchange for business paper which represented some actual value of produce or merchandise for the movement of which the currency was issued.

It remains a matter of conjecture whether Mr. Stone goes as far as he can in the direction of freedom in banking, or whether he went only so far as he dared. If he had followed this idea to its logical termination, he would certainly have seen that currency could be issued directly on property, — the imperishable products of labor and the soil. And since it must be evident to even the ordinary mind that nothing short of this could by any possibility approach a "perfect currency," it is just possible that Mr. Stone had some thought of this rational application of the principle of State banking when he said, anent the proposition to repeal the ten per cent. tax on the issue of State banks:

> There would follow from its repeal the most perfect currency for business purposes the world has ever known. Flexible in its character, redeemable at all central points, and thus always at par throughout every portion of the country, and meeting the needs of the hour in its answer to every legitimate demand, it would prevent pressures and stringency in the money market, and injure no one but the greedy speculator who makes his cent. per cent. in a financial crisis.

Of course the utterances of such people are not significant of any thoughtful study, on their part, of the economic question from the standpoint of Equal Freedom; they are simply the outcome of the drift of individual intelligence towards enlightenment. But it is possible that, if the attention of Mr. Stone were called to the conclusions which logically follow from his premises, he might be able to see that "the most perfect currency for business purposes the world has ever known" is possible only through the entire absence of government restriction and regulation, and through the acceptance of every form of wealth of actual and imperishable value as a basis for the issue of currency.

Unless this be done, the substitution of State restriction for Federal monopoly can be regarded as a very short "step" in the direction of Freedom.

C. L. SWARTZ.

Millionaires vs. the Public.

In the opinion of the editor of the "Review of Reviews" (English edition), it is the part of wisdom for millionaires, in view of the deep-rooted jealousy of vast fortunes which is growing up, to pay a liberal ransom to society, not only during life, but also at death, and to justify their existence generally by doing things for the public which the public cannot do for itself. "The next parliament," Mr. Stead goes on to say, 'will not expire before an energetic attempt has been made to deal with the question of 'death duties.' At first it is possible that the millionaire may be allowed an option; that is to say, if by will he sets aside the stipulated minimum to objects of public utility or private charity, his estate may be exempted from the new impost; but should he entirely ignore the claims of the public, then the law will step in and levy the proportion which the legislature in its wisdom deems to be fair and just." I observe that Mr. Stead forbears to offer any guidance to the legislature in the matter of determining what a fair and just proportion is, nor am I aware of any attempt on the part of any other disinterested advocate of the "claims of the public" to indicate the principles whereby the problem might be solved. It is obvious, however, that, no matter how wise the legislature might be, it is impossible to determine the just proportion in the absence of principles permitting the drawing of corollaries with regard to the rights of the millionaires and the claims of the public. The first task before the legislature will be, therefore, the discovery of such fundamental principles.

I am constrained to point out, however, that legislators are in the habit of dispensing with all such preliminary investigations and proceeding to impose taxes and create conditions without the least concern about ultimate principles. And "able editors" like Mr. Stead are never known to disapprove such methods, or to suspect that there is anything imperfect about them. Yet, can there be anything more irrational than the use of such absolutely meaningless (to them) words as "fair," "just," "claims," in connection with this question of millionaires *versus* the public?

This talk about "ransoming" millionaires would be monstrous and barbarous, did it not point to a vague consciousness of the truth that vast fortunes are not, as a rule, compatible with justice in political and social life, and that millionaires are the product of monopolies, special legislation, privileges, and other forms of legal

injustice. The respect for private property is certainly not decaying, and it would be repugnant to the *sentiment* of justice to deprive any person, whether poor or rich, of anything legitimately acquired in a fair, free, and open field. The dependence of vast fortunes on legal injustice is felt rather than reasoned out, and this accounts for the deep-rooted jealousy of the former. That the public has some claims in the premises is held to be certain, though no definition or circumscription of such claims is possible.

A little thought would lead to the conclusion that the impossibility of defining the claims in question renders rectification and adjustment impossible and improper. Hap-hazard adjustment is sure to generate greater evils than those sought to be remedied. Instead of vainly trying to rectify past sins in this particular respect, the legislators and "able editors" should turn their attention to the study of that science which alone can guide them to the prevention of the repetition of past abuses and the introduction of right principles in political relations. To rectify all the evils of the past is impossible; to provide for justice in the future is not. There are three alternatives: to attempt, in ignorance of all principles, to remedy past wrongs; to refuse to deal either for the past or for the future; and to reform things along the lines of true social laws so as to render the future secure. The intelligent will make the choice without difficulty.

V. Y.

Is Frick a Soldier of Liberty?

To the Editor of Liberty:

In vain have I waited to hear from you a word of approval of the efforts of a man who lately has even risked his life in a fierce struggle for liberty. For even though Frick is one of the "Brotherhood of Thieves," he is now on the side of Liberty. Nor can I see that he is any more responsible for the existence of that "Brotherhood" than those that lead the contention against him. His only crime is that he is successful under present conditions. Of course, being an employer myself, my opinion may possibly be warped; but if Frick, in this particular case at least, has instituted a war against the oppressive monopoly of labor unions, defending liberty and independence, I do not see why Anarchists should condemn him therefor. Let the other side do the same, — *i.e.*, combat the inequities of the present system by removing obstructions instead of increasing their number. I am sure, if the workmen should insist upon the proper remedy, the inequitable power of capital would soon be gone. If, however, these men do not understand the source of this power, is it fair to assume that the Fricks do? Is it true that all the workmen are fools, while all the Fricks are knaves? And, on that assumption, how is it possible to help those who resist the only measure that can help them, — *i.e.*, Liberty?

HUGO BILGRAM.

PHILADELPHIA, AUGUST 12, 1892.

When that most brilliant of Catholic journalists, Louis Veuillot, was once taunted by the Freethinkers in power because he, a Catholic and an unbeliever in liberty, had complained that the liberties of Catholics were denied, he thus made answer to his critics: "When I am not in power, I demand of you who are in power all possible liberties, because you believe in liberty; when I get into power, you shall have no liberties at all, because I do not believe in liberty." Veuillot was in religion what Frick is in political economy, — a believer in liberty for himself and his immediate allies, and in slavery for everybody else. Neither the Veuillots nor the Fricks have any use whatever for a society based throughout on equal liberty. Now when a man goes into a struggle in this Napoleonic style and in the course of it gets a knock-down blow, it is going too far to ask an Anarchist, a believer in equal liberty, to sympathize with or approve this would-be despot simply because at a particular moment in his struggle for unequal liberty he happens to defend a liberty which equal liberty recognizes.

But, Mr. Bilgram tells me, these union laborers are also struggling for unequal liberty; why then sympathize with them? True enough; and their claim to sympathy is greatly lessened by their abominable authoritarianism. If it will comfort Mr. Bilgram, I take pleasure in assuring him that, if the time ever comes when these trade-union employees are thoroughly on top with their hands fastened upon their employers' throats, and when in consequence the employees begin to wax fat and the employers to grow wan and thin, much of my sympathy will be transferred from the employees to the employers. When both parties to a fight are wrong, whatever sympathy is felt goes naturally to the one that suffers most. Apart from this friendly feeling for the under-dog, however, there is another consideration which mitigates the offence of the labor authoritarians as compared with that of the capitalist authoritarians. The latter, for the most part in knavery, set up authority as a weapon of aggression; the former, for the most part in ignorance and following the latter's example, resort to authority originally as a weapon of defence. The difference is considerable.

Mr. Bilgram and I agree almost to a dot as to what constitutes the true solution of the difficulties at Homestead and of nearly all other labor difficulties whatsoever. I agree with him too that, if the workmen knew the remedy, they could apply it very quickly and effectively. But I do not think that the ignorance of the workmen implies a similar and equal ignorance on the part of the employers. For one thing, the employers, as a rule, are men of superior education and intellect. And for another thing, the creators of a scheme of aggression are much less likely to be innocent of evil intent than the victims. To be sure, there are many exceptions, and I have said nothing to the contrary. I am just as certain, for instance, that the employer, Hugo Bilgram, is not a knave as I am that Dana and Frick are knaves. If there were no such exceptions, then, as Mr. Bilgram says, the situation would be hopeless. It is on these exceptions that my hope rests. All the employers are not knaves, and all the workmen are not such fools that they cannot acquire wisdom; and because of these two facts I see Light and Liberty ahead.

T.

Did Swedenborg "See" State Socialism?

[Coventry Patmore in Fortnightly Review.]

Indications are not wanting of the sort of "government" we are committed to, unless the coming war shall leave us in the grip of a less irksome tyranny. It will be a despotism which will have to be mitigated by continual "tips," as the other kind has had to be by occasional assassination. Neither the voter nor the inspector yet know their power and opportunities; but they soon will. We shall have to "square" the district surveyor once or twice a year, lest imaginary drains become a greater terror than real typhoid; we shall have to smoke our pipes secretly and with a sense of sin, lest the moral supervisor of the parish should decline our offer of half-a-crown for holding his nose during his weekly examination of our bedrooms and closets; the good Churchman will have to receive Communion under the "species" of ginger-ale, — as some advanced congregations have already proposed, — unless the parson can elude the churchwarden with white port, or otherwise persuade him; and, every now and then, all this will be changed, and we shall have to tip our policemen and inspectors for looking over our infractions of popular moralities of a newer pattern. Our condition will very much resemble Swedenborg's hell, in which everybody is incessantly engaged in the endeavor to make everybody else virtuous; and the only compensating comforts to the sane will be, that, though wine and tobacco, those natural stimulants to good impulses and fruitful meditations, may be denied him, he may find abundant time and opportunity, in the cessation of all external interests of a moral and intellectual nature, for improving his own character.

Not Cant. Oh! No!

21B Queen Anne Mansions, South Kensington, London, March 15, 1890.

My Dearest Cordelia,

How deeply shocking are the terrible revelations relating to the Russian atrocities on women! We, who are in some sort leaders of women in our land, cannot let the occasion pass without some active comment. I am exceedingly busy just now, but I would willingly coöperate with you in organizing a mass meeting at Exeter Hall, if you should see fit to unite our forces to that end.

Yours, with deep sorrow for all the oppressed,

EDITHA ST. CLAIR.

2 Hyde Park Mansions, London, March 17, 1890.

Dear Editha,

I shall gladly coöperate with you and in a manner with which I know you will certainly sympathize. We English women ought not to remain silent and inactive at this moment, if, as I believe, our hearts are full of pity for our Russian sisters. From our full hearts we must give them consolation. Editha, I do not like Cant, and I dislike long-winded prayers, but I do believe that a brief earnest prayer where two or three are gathered and uttered with fearless faith has Power. Will you and any prominent ladies you know join me in such a Prayer for the succor of our Russian sisters in their unspeakable anguish? I would propose 12 o'clock noon on Sunday, 19th and 26th, as the hour when many of us may unite to send forth a wave of love and sympathy to them and of prayer to God.

I remain, yours ever,

CORDELIA CUNNINGHAME.

What! We deplore the atrocities committed under the omnipotent rule of the all-wise God, and set ourselves to gather in a cantless company and nudge His Holy elbow with Power that He may, on account of our Beseeching, and not from any Divine Pity in His Eternal breast, stretch out His Hand that wrought the mischief to stay it for a time!

O Editha of the Queen Anne Mansions! and O My Lady Leader of Ladies! What a cheap wave you did send forth to the Russian sisters! With what exaltation did you return on dainty tip-toe to your elegant lunches from that prayer to your Fetish who could not manage even his own Devil, and is unlikely to be able to compass the Czar of all the Russias.

And now you can rest assured you have done all you could do, and, as the atrocities still go on, why, speak softly and deprecatingly, "It is His Will" —

And remember, there was a love of a salmon pink silk in a shop in Regent Street.

MIRIAM DANIELL.

The Great Disillusionizer.

[Robert Reitzel in Der Arme Teufel.]

According to the usual irony of fate, the grave of the most independent of all thinkers is in the cemetery of the Sophia Society, from whose trustees permission had first to be secured. If the gentlemen had known who and what was concealed behind this simple name (Max Stirner), they would never have permitted such a desecration of their god's acre. If a high Prussian government could suspect what philosophy it is that has found its most consistent expression in Stirner's book, it would erect barracks and a garrison-church upon every spot out of which might grow some memory of this Schmidt before whom the chains of all the smiths cannot hold their own. Fortunately simplicity and malice always see only their immediate and noisiest enemies, and content themselves with punishing the men who supply the coming generation the chemical means for the absolute disintegration of the lie of the State and Society with contempt and the sentence of slow death by starvation on account of uselessness.

The idea of a monument for Stirner found little response among the few in America who knew him. I

also expressed my doubts about the matter at the time. But the simplicity manifested in the execution, and which one ought indeed to have expected from a Mackay, has, upon me at least, an entirely conciliatory effect. Among the thousands who pass along that Berlin street or who visit that churchyard, there may perhaps be one whose attention will be arrested by reading the name of Stirner, and who, feeling a strange memory rise in him, will acquaint that very night some other soul with the truth of the book which destroys even our few remaining illusions, to give us, in the ice-bath of absolute liberty, that happiness which will be the normal condition among the uninfluenced people of a who knows how distant future.

Enthusiasm.

The creative instinct Ardor, men have ruled it out of date,
As they did in bye-gone ages in their wisdom and their state,
But, until we all are *blasé*, we enthuse at any rate.

Puritans would dock man's pleasures, sober Quakers at the start
Ruled men lived for life supernal, henceforth there should be no art;
Crushed life's forces, and preferred abnormal brain and stunted heart.

Surplus energy unwasted when the living's earned with toil
And necessity unhands him is a man's most precious spoil;
How he spends it or he hoards it futile laws may make turmoil.

Art, enthusiasm's child, will give the lie to those who say
That its father Man is worn out, that its Mother's had her day;
Some like coarse sense pleasures; they may smoke and breed and feed their clay.

What! because they like to live thus, must they make a lasting law
None shall live another usage? That is far as tyrants saw;
Kings thought tides, if they commanded, would retire mid sea with awe.

Dancing, it was of the devil; but, as long as men have legs,
They will spin and twist and gyrate, though God grants them wooden pegs
In the next world when they've pleasure's lees, the foul eternal dregs.

Dogma priests invented to keep man discreet and make walk wise,
Hoodwinked for the present times by staring upward at the skies,
Full of fear and paying popes well for their absolution lies.

Philosophers may call their wares, state that this is wrong or right,
Men will live just as they like when all their powers have come to light.
Evolution may discover stranger things than black is white.

But enthusiasm's joy wins love and praise and will express
Faultily, but still in some sort, man's love forces, all the less
And all the greater for the Universe his soul's ornate dress.

Nerveless folk may take the back seat, with the aged nurse the fire
Lit to warm their bones rheumatic, virile youth still has desire,
Heat within him which will find a vent or land him in the mire.

Selfish doings, yes, you sitting by the hearth croak, but what odds
If they've found it, found life's well-spring with their keen divining-rods?
Fools, your sneers recoil to your low level, youth sits with the gods.

Miriam Daniell.

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